

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 2701

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 01791

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

FOR TARNOFF AND HARROP ONLY FROM DICK MOOSE

E.O. LL652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK
SUBJECT: EVENING READING FOR PRESIDENT: RHODESIA:
MALTA TALKS

1. THE MALTA TALKS WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ENDED AT NOON TODAY WITHOUT TANGIBLE RESULTS BUT WITH ALL PARTICIPANTS STRIKING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE. ALTHOUGH WE WENT INTO THE TALKS ANTICIPATING STRIDENT DEMANDS THAT WE DENOUNCE THE SALISBURY TALKS AND MOVE IMMEDIATELY TO REMOVE SMITH, ANDY YOUNG AND DAVID OWEN REPORT THAT PATRIOTIC FRONT LEADERS NKOMO AND MUGABE

MAINTAINED A LOW-KEY, MATTER-OF-FACT APPROACH THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSIONS. WHILE THEY DID NOT, AS WE HAD FEARED, DEMAND THAT MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE BE EXCLUDED FROM PARTICIPATION IN FUTURE TALKS OR IN POSSIBLE TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS, THEY DID INSIST UPON A QUOTE DOMINANT UNQUOTE ROLE FOR THE PATRIOTIC FRONT DURING THE TRANSITION. THE LATTER POSITION WAS MANIFESTED MOST STRONGLY IN THE FRONT'S OBJECTIONS TO THE ALL POWERFUL ROLE ENVISAGED FOR THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER IN THE BRITISH-AMERICAN PLAN AND TO THE PROPOSED RELIANCE
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UPON THE EXISTING RHODESIAN POLICE DURING THE TRANSITION.

2. OWEN AND YOUNG WERE FIRM IN THEIR REFUSAL TO COMPROMISE THE EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY OF THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER OR TO ACCORD THE PATRIOTIC FRONT A SPECIAL, LET ALONE DOMINANT, ROLE IN THE TRANSITION. OWEN POINTED OUT VERY STRONGLY THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT COULD NOT UNDERTAKE ITS TRANSITION ROLE

WITHOUT UNOBSTRUCTED POWERS AND YOUNG EMPHASIZED THAT WE COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO UNDERTAKE ANY MEASURES AGAINST SMITH IN SUPPORT OF TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS WHICH DID NOT PROVIDE FOR AN OPEN, DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. REPEATEDLY, IN BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS,

YOUNG EMPHASIZED TO THE PATRIOTIC FRONT THAT THIS POSITION WAS PERCEIVED AS UNREASONABLE AND THAT IF THEY PERSISTED IN THEIR PRESENT ATTITUDES, AN INTERNAL SOLUTION OR A PROTRACTED MILITARY CONFLICT WOULD BE THE LIKELY ALTERNATIVES.

3. IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSIONS OWEN ADAPTED THE TRANSITION PROPOSALS TO PROVIDE FOR A QUOTE GOVERNING COUNCIL UNQUOTE WHICH WOULD ACCORD EQUAL ROLES TO NKOMO, MUGABE, MUZOREWA, SITHOLE, AND THE RHODESIAN WHITES IN THE EXERCISE OF A CAREFULLY LIMITED LEGISLATIVE FUNCTION. WHILE THE PATRIOTIC FRONT DID NOT ACCEPT THIS PROPOSAL, THEY DID NOT REJECT IT.

4. DURING THE DISCUSSION OF THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER'S POWERS, THE POLICE QUESTION, AND LORD CARVER'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS PROPOSALS FOR THE FORMATION OF AN INDEPENDENT ARMY, OUR NEGOTIATORS WERE ABLE TO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 01791

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

EXPLAIN OUR PROPOSALS IN GREAT DETAIL, SOMETHING WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO DO BEFORE. BOTH OWEN AND YOUNG WERE STRUCK BY THE TEMPERATE NATURE OF THE RESPONSES OF BOTH NKOMO AND MUGABE. AS A RESULT, WE NOW HAVE MUCH CLEARER NOTIONS OF THE FRONT'S STICKING POINTS.

5. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THE CONFERENCE ENDED WITHOUT THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANY SPECIFIC POINTS OF AGREEMENT, THE FRONT MADE CLEAR ITS INTEREST IN NEGOTIATING WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE BRITISH-AMERICAN PLAN. INDEED, AT THE END, NKOMO AND MUGABE WERE PRESSING FOR A FIRM COMMITMENT TO ANOTHER MEETING AT A FIXED DATE IN AFRICA. OWEN AND YOUNG RESISTED THIS BUT DID RAISE THE POSSIBILITY OF SEEING THE TWO LEADERS IN NEW YORK ON FEBRUARY 10 JUST PRIOR TO THE NAMIBIA TALKS. WE BELIEVE THAT WE CAN AFFORD TO SIT BACK NOW FOR A TIME AND LET THE PATRIOTIC FRONT

CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVES. THIS MAY ENABLE US TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN COUNTERING THE SALISBURY TALKS AND BUYING TIME TO BUILD UP THEIR MILITARY EFFORT, OR SERIOUSLY WILLING TO WORK TOWARD A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.

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6. MEANWHILE, OWEN IS INSTRUCTING HIS PEOPLE TO BRIEF ALL THE OTHER PARTIES -- MUZOREWA, SITHOLE AND SMITH -- ON THE TALKS AND TO PROVIDE THEM WITH DOCUMENTS CIRCULATED IN THE CONFERENCE. THESE CONTACTS SHOULD BE REASSURING TO MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE AND STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION IN DEALING WITH IAN SMITH.

7. DICK MOOSE BELIEVES THAT THE CONFERENCE HAS LEFT US IN A DEFENSIBLE AND FLEXIBLE POSITION. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT IS NOW PRESSING US, RATHER THAN VICE VERSA. BECAUSE THERE ARE ALSO SIGNS OF FRONT LINE ANXIETY ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT OR A PROTRACTED MILITARY STRUGGLE, WE MAY FIND THEM TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO PRESS THE PATRIOTIC FRONT TOWARD OUR POSITION.

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